

## **KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

### **STAFF NOTE**

#### **Action/Discussion Item:**

Assessment design issues and the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)  
Request for Proposals (RFP)

#### **Applicable Statute or Regulation:**

KRS 158.645 - 158.6472

#### **Action Question:**

Should the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) approve staff's recommendations regarding specific assessment design issues that will provide parameters for drafting of the CATS RFP?

#### **History/Background:**

***Existing Policy.*** Pursuant to KRS 158.6453, the Commonwealth is required to have a statewide assessment and accountability program. The current contractual arrangements for administering the assessment program expire on June 30, 2006, except those required to complete the scoring and reporting of the spring 2006 assessment that will continue through September 30, 2006. To assure continued implementation of the assessment and accountability system, a Request for Proposals (RFP) must be developed by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), from the parameters approved by the Kentucky Board of Education and then issued by the Division of Purchases in the Finance and Administration Cabinet. According to current procurement requirements, any such proposals must be for a two-year duration with allowance for an additional two-year extension. KDE has identified the summer of 2005, as the target date for release of the RFP. Evaluation of bids would occur from July 2005 – January 2006. Notification of the successful bidder is anticipated to be in January 2006, allowing the bidder a six-month window to work with KDE and the current vendor to assure a smooth transition prior to assuming full responsibility on July 1, 2006, the effective date of the new contract.

***Background.*** The current RFP for assessment was issued in 1998. At that time, the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* did not exist, widespread statewide testing across the country had not yet been implemented, technological advances in testing that are currently available were not yet accessible, and many of the lessons learned from implementation of the CATS assessment over time had not yet been discovered. As staff began development of the new RFP, it became clear that a new environment exists and new pressures on the assessment system require consideration of different measures to be responsive to the broader needs of the field and to assure that our students are well-positioned to compete in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

***Considerations for the Design.*** In designing the elements of the new assessment system, staff used the values and priorities that were gleaned from various discussions over time with the KBE

as guiding principles for the process. Staff presented information to assist the Board in understanding the assessment design considerations at the April KBE meeting, and a proposed recommendation at the May retreat. After taking note of further direction provided by the Board at its retreat, staff has proposed a recommendation for the Board's action at the June meeting. A copy of a document capturing the Board's guidance that was presented by the Commissioner at the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee (EAARS) on May 20 is attached (Attachment A). Also attached are three documents explaining staff's current recommendation (Attachments B1, B2, and B3) and a copy of a draft outline of the proposed contents and cost elements of the RFP (Attachments C1 and C2).

### **Staff Recommendation and Rationale:**

KDE staff recommends that the Board approve the recommendations found in Attachment B regarding the CATS assessment design. These decisions will allow KDE to move forward with the Finance and Administration Cabinet to complete the RFP process.

### **Impact on Getting to Proficiency:**

All Kentucky schools aim for the same ultimate goal: proficiency for all students. The state assessment and accountability system is a means to determine what a school and district can do to: (1) improve student achievement, and (2) ensure each student progresses toward meeting student capacities and school goals as defined in Kentucky regulations and initiatives of the Kentucky Board of Education. The design of future assessments is critical to reaching the goal of proficiency.

### **Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:**

Recognizing the importance of the issues discussed and the level of stakeholder interest in their resolution, staff has in the past and continues to obtain information from EAARS, NTAPAA, SCAAC, the Commissioner's advisory groups and any other parties with an interest as the assessment design process moves forward. Input from the groups will be reorted at the June meeting.

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**Deputy Commissioner**

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**Commissioner of Education**

**Date:**

June 2005